



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## NOTES ON THE SYMBOLISM OF THE APPLE IN CLASSICAL ANTIQUITY.<sup>1</sup>

BY BENJAMIN OLIVER FOSTER.

THE stories of the Garden of the Hesperides and the wooing of Atalanta suggest at once the importance of the apple in ancient mythology; but the extent to which superstitions of various kinds about apples are current to this day, and even in our own country, may perhaps not be so generally realized. These modern folk-notions about the apple have to do chiefly, so far as I am acquainted with them, with love or fruitfulness. A girl removes the peel of an apple in one long strip, throws it back over her head, and, turning round, tries to discover, in its twists and curves, the initial of her sweetheart. Or the seeds of an apple are placed on the palm of the hand, which is then clapped to the forehead, and, from the number of seeds sticking there, certain valuable conclusions are drawn. H. F. Tozer says that in modern Greece throwing an apple is a sign to express love, or to make an offer of marriage.<sup>2</sup> Frazer in *The Golden Bough*<sup>3</sup> tells of a custom among the Kara-Kirgiz, in accordance with which barren women roll upon the ground under a solitary apple-tree, in order to obtain offspring. By an old Hallow-e'en custom, still kept up in Scotland, a maiden goes alone into a room and eats an apple before a mirror, whereupon the face of her future husband is supposed to appear, looking over

---

<sup>1</sup> Fränkel, *Arch. Zeit.* xxxi (1874), pp. 36 ff., in an article on the Venus of Melos, gives a partial list of passages, and a brief discussion of the subject. It is treated also in Dilthey's *de Callimachi Cydippa* (Leips. 1863), to which I am indebted for a number of citations. Clearchus of Soli, a scholar of the Alexandrine period, wrote a little essay of about 250 words on this subject (Athen. xii. p. 553 E) chiefly interesting to us as showing that in his time the origin of the symbolism was quite forgotten.

<sup>2</sup> *Researches in the Highlands of Turkey*, 1869, ii. p. 331. Cf. Wachsmuth, *Das alte Griechenland im Neuen*, pp. 82 ff.

<sup>3</sup> i. p. 73.

her shoulder.<sup>1</sup> In Montenegro a bride takes an apple and attempts to throw it upon the roof of her husband's house, believing that, if she succeeds, their union will be blessed with children.<sup>2</sup>

The Greek and Roman counterpart of this modern conception of the efficacy of the apple in such matters forms the subject of this paper. I have endeavored to make a complete collection of the allusions to the thing in literature, and have used the evidence of art, in a few places, where it promised to be helpful. I have not, however, attempted a thorough study of the representations of the apple in ancient art.

The word 'apple' I have ventured to use throughout as a convenient translation of *μῆλον*, which may mean almost any sort of tree-fruit, except the nut. To attempt to distinguish the different kinds of *μῆλα*, or to determine which kind is meant in each particular instance would be beside my purpose. Any one who is interested in this phase of the subject will find a good treatment of the words *μῆλον*, *malum*, etc., in Victor Hehn's *Kulturpflanzen u. Haustiere*, 1894<sup>6</sup>, pp. 594 ff.<sup>3</sup>

In considering the apple as a love gift, it will be convenient to start with its connexion with Aphrodite. For this we have in art, including that of the best period, very abundant evidence, and I shall cite only a few typical illustrations. Pausanias,<sup>4</sup> in describing the cult at Sicyon, tells of a statue of the goddess by Canachus, which held a poppy in one hand, and an apple in the other. The Aphrodite of Alcamenes, too, of which the so-called Venus Genetrix is a copy, held an apple in her left hand. Fränkel<sup>5</sup> describes an archaic mirror frame, now in the Berlin Antiquarium, in which Aphrodite is represented with an apple in her right hand. A silver statuette from Syria<sup>6</sup> represents her with a mirror in one hand, and an apple in the other. The Rhamnusian Nemesis is

<sup>1</sup> R. Folcard, Jr., *Plant Lore, Legends and Lyrics*, Lond., 1884, p. 220.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 222; other examples will be found in this chapter.

<sup>3</sup> See also the article *Apfel* by F. Olck in the Pauly-Wissowa *Real-Encyclopädie*, 1894.

<sup>4</sup> Paus. ii. 10. 5.

<sup>5</sup> *Arch. Zeit.* xxxi. p. 39.

<sup>6</sup> Lajard, *Recherches sur le culte de Venus*, Pl. 19, 5 (cited by Fränkel).

represented as holding an apple bough, and the Rhamnusian Nemesis, we are told,<sup>1</sup> was patterned after Aphrodite. With the statue of Aphrodite discovered in Melos were found certain fragments, one of which is a left hand holding an apple. It is Fränkel's opinion that this belongs with the statue, though this is doubtful. It would be easy to multiply examples, but it is, perhaps, unnecessary.

To the connexion of the goddess with fruits, points also the cult-name ἐν κήποις, under which designation Aphrodite Urania was worshipped at Athens. Further evidence of her being a vegetation goddess — *Aphrodite des Erdenlebens* — are the titles *μηλεία*,<sup>2</sup> ἐν καλάμοις, or ἐν ἔλει,<sup>3</sup> ἄνθεια,<sup>4</sup> ζείδωρος,<sup>5</sup> ἡπιόδωρος,<sup>6</sup> and εὐκαρπος.<sup>7</sup> With these may be compared the famous invocation by Lucretius in his first book.<sup>8</sup>

Another good proof of this connexion of the apple with Aphrodite is the Atalanta myth. The story as told by Servius is, in brief, as follows : Atalanta's father Schoeneus learned from an oracle that, after her marriage, she was destined to die, or, according to other accounts, to be transformed into some animal. To prevent such a catastrophe, the trial of speed was imposed upon all wooers, with the provision that, in the event of her being victorious, the defeated suitor should suffer death, but that the first man who succeeded in out-running her should have her for his wife. Hippomenes called upon Aphrodite for aid in his attempt, and the goddess gave him three golden apples from the garden of the Hesperides, and explained to him their use. Provided with these, Hippomenes entered the race, and, whenever Atalanta's fleetness left him behind, he threw out an apple, to one side or the other, and she, stopping each time to pick up the pretty

---

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Suidas, Hesychius, Photius, *s.vv.*

<sup>2</sup> Farnell, *Cults of the Greek States*, ii. pp. 642 f., says: "The pomegranate was sacred to her in Cyprus and on coins, of the Roman period, of Magnesia on the Maeander we find the figure of the goddess with this fruit in her hand, and with the inscription 'Ἀφροδίτη μηλεία.'"

<sup>3</sup> Athen. xiii. 572 F.

<sup>4</sup> Hesychius *s.v.*

<sup>5</sup> Empedocles so called her, according to Plutarch, *Am.* p. 756 E.

<sup>6</sup> Stesichorus, *frag.* 26.

<sup>7</sup> Plutarch, *loc. cit.*, says Sophocles so called her.

<sup>8</sup> Lucr. i. 1 ff., especially vv. 7 f., *tibi suavis daedala tellus | summittit flores.*

toy, was vanquished in the race, and became his bride. Hippomenes, however, forgot or neglected to return thanks to Aphrodite, and was punished by Cybele, whose sacred grove Aphrodite had impelled him to violate, by being turned, with his bride, into a pair of lions.<sup>1</sup>

This story is a very old one. We can trace it back, through a couple of fragments, to Hesiod's poem on the Heroines.<sup>2</sup> But these fragments afford no evidence that Hesiod told about apples in this story, nor have we any pre-Alexandrine author to help us; for Theocritus is the earliest writer, next to Hesiod, who furnishes any allusion to the myth. We should be compelled to admit, then, that Atalanta's apples, like the apple of Discord, might possibly have been a late invention, were it not for a Greek *crater*, discovered in 1887, which Robert<sup>3</sup> describes as belonging to the best period of the art — the middle of the fifth century — and to the school of Polygnotus. I think everybody must agree with him that there can be no question but that this painting represents the story of Atalanta. Its chief features are these: on the left are Schoeneus and Atalanta — the latter nude, save for a band wound about her hair, with its ends fluttering in the breeze, and bands of some sort (Ovid's *talaria*<sup>4</sup>) about her feet. On the right, Hippomenes is making ready. He has put off his *chlamys*, and, having anointed himself, is about to use the flesh-scaper, but has stopped short, and is gazing in astonishment at Aphrodite, who, dressed in rich attire, appears before him, though she seems to be invisible to the others. In her right hand is an apple, which she is reaching out to Hippomenes, and Eros,<sup>5</sup> who attends her, carries another apple. It cannot be made out, from the somewhat obliterated left hand of the goddess, whether that holds the third apple, or not. Other (male) figures are perhaps attendants upon Hippomenes, or, it may be, his rivals for the hand of the princess.

---

<sup>1</sup> Serv. *ad Aen.* iii. 113.

<sup>2</sup> Edition of Rzach, *frag.* 42, 43.

<sup>3</sup> *Hermes*, xxii. pp. 445 ff.

<sup>4</sup> *Ov. Metam.* x. 591.

<sup>5</sup> For the apple in connexion with Eros, which is doubtless due to his relationship to Aphrodite, cf. Philostr. *Imag.* i. 6; Furtwängler, *Vasen-sammlung* (Berlin 1885), nos. 2387, 2911, etc.

So it seems certain that when Theocritus says:

Ἴππομένης ὄκα δὴ τὰν παρθένον ἤθελε γάμαι,  
μᾶλ' ἐν χερσὶν ἑλὼν δρόμον ἄνυνε·

Theoc. *Idyll.* iii. 40 f.

he is not inventing, nor borrowing from another Alexandrine, but is thinking of the old form of the legend, perhaps that of Hesiod himself. Robert<sup>1</sup> notes, also, that Ovid's beautiful version of the story is in curiously minute accord with this painting.<sup>2</sup> He, too, is apparently drawing from the same source with Theocritus.

Before dismissing this story, I should not omit to state that there are traces of a version connecting the apples of Atalanta with Dionysus. Theocritus, in the *Pharmaceutriæ*, makes the lover speak of coming to his mistress,

μᾶλα μὲν ἐν κόλποισι Διωνύσοιο φυλάσσω,

Theoc. *Idyll.* ii. 120.

and the scholiast comments: Μᾶλα μὲν: Καλλίμαχος ἐν τῷ περὶ Λογᾶδων τὸν Διονύσου στέφανον ἐκ μήλων εἶναι φησιν, ἐξ ὧν καὶ τὸν Ἴππομένην λαβεῖν, Ἀφροδίτης αἰτησαμένης, ὡς Διόδωρος ὁ ποιητῆς ἐν Κορινθικοῖς. — Μᾶλα μὲν ἐν κόλπῃ: τὰ ἐράσματα καὶ ἔρωτος ποιητικά, καθὼς ὑπὸ Ἀφροδίτης διδόμενα τῷ Ἴππομένει μῆλα ἐκ Διονύσου. ταῦτα δὲ εἰς ἔρωτα τὴν Ἀταλάντην ἐκίνησεν, ὡς φησιν ὁ Φιλητᾶς.

τά οἱ ποτε Κύπρις ἐλοῖσα

μῆλα Διωνύσου δῶκεν ἀπὸ κροτάφω.

This scholium is also noteworthy, as affording the only hint which we have, that the golden apples had, for Atalanta, any significance apart from their beauty, which attracted her as a toy does a child.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Loc. cit.* p. 448.

<sup>2</sup> Ov. *Metam.* x. 560 ff. Note especially vv. 650 f.; 578–580; 591 ff.

<sup>3</sup> The late epigrammatist Arabius saw in Atalanta's apples a *marriage-gift* (on which see below):

ἔδνα γάμων ἔρριπτες ἢ ἀμβολίην ταχυτήτος  
τοῦτο γέρας κούρη χρύσειον, Ἴππομένης;  
ἀμφω μῆλον ἄνυσσεν, ἐπεὶ καὶ παρθένον ὁρμῆς  
εἶργεν, καὶ ζυγίης σύμβολον ἦν Παφίης.

*Anth. Plan.* 144.

Let us next consider the story of the Apple of Discord and the Judgment of Paris. So far as we know, the apple in this story is, as I have said, a late invention. It is so familiar a tale, that we can hardly realize that the classic poets of Greece did not know it at all, but this seems to be the truth. Lucian,<sup>1</sup> a scholiast on Euripides,<sup>2</sup> the epigrammatist Damocharis,<sup>3</sup> and the very late epic poet Coluthus<sup>4</sup> are our only sources in Greek, while Latin literature has only Hyginus,<sup>5</sup> Servius,<sup>6</sup> Apuleius,<sup>7</sup> and some writers in the Anthology.<sup>8</sup> Art can do no better for us. Here it first certainly appears, says Fränkel,<sup>9</sup> in wall-paintings and Roman reliefs. Nevertheless, the lateness of its appearance in the story does not make it valueless for us, since it furnishes one more piece of evidence that the apple was, in ancient times, connected with Aphrodite. Fränkel,<sup>10</sup> indeed, sees in this legend a direct connexion with the subject of the present study, — surmising that these late writers conceived of Paris as bestowing his favor upon the goddess by the symbolism of the gift of an apple, just as men gave apples to their mortal sweethearts. With this idea I am not inclined to agree, however, since none of our sources for this story make Paris a lover of Aphrodite, nor do they give any hint of such a thing — unless the award of the apple be itself considered as implying it.

Still another indication of the relation of the apple to Aphrodite is the story of Melus, as told by Servius.<sup>11</sup> He relates that Melus, priest of Aphrodite, and foster-father of Adonis, hanged himself on a tree, with grief at the latter's untimely death. Aphrodite then turned him into an apple-tree, which was named, for him, *μηλον*.

---

<sup>1</sup> Lucian, *Sympos.* 35; *Dial. Mar.* 5.

<sup>2</sup> Schol. Eur. *Androm.* 276.

<sup>3</sup> *Anth. Pal.* ix. 633.

<sup>4</sup> Coluthus, *de raptu Helenes*, 67.

<sup>5</sup> Hyg. *Fab.* 92.

<sup>6</sup> Serv. *ad Aen.* i. 27.

<sup>7</sup> Apul. *Metam.* x. 32.

<sup>8</sup> Riese, i. p. 117, Nos. 133, 134, 135; p. 125, Nos. 165, 166.

<sup>9</sup> *Loc. cit.* p. 38, note 12.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* p. 38.

<sup>11</sup> Serv. *ad Ecl.* viii. 37.

Finally, the notes on the Rhamnusian Nemesis in Suidas and Photius indicate that the apple was universally known as an attribute of Aphrodite. Suidas, under the caption 'Ραμνονσία Νέμεσις, says: αὕτη πρῶτον ἀφίδρυτο ἐν Ἀφροδίτης σχήματι· διὸ καὶ κλάδον εἶχε μηλέας, and the same words are found in the note of Photius.

Two other myths should be mentioned here, after which I shall consider the apple as used in historic times. These are the story of the apples which Mother Earth caused to grow, as a wedding gift to Hera,<sup>1</sup> and the story about Persephone, which relates that she was compelled to remain with Pluto in the lower world, because she had eaten of a pomegranate there, and had thereby sealed irrevocably the marriage compact.<sup>2</sup> With these myths should be compared the following statement in Plutarch: ὁ Σόλων ἐκέλευε τὴν νύμφην τῷ νυμφίῳ συγκατακλίνεσθαι μήλου Κυδωνίου κατατραγοῦσαν· αἰνιττόμενος, ὡς ἔοικεν, ὅτι δεῖ τὴν ἀπὸ στόματος καὶ φωνῆς χάριν εὐάρμοστον εἶναι πρῶτον καὶ ἡδέϊαν. *Coniug. Praecept.* 1, p. 138 D; cf. *Quaest. Rom.* 65, p. 279 F. This passage proves the use of the apple in marriage rites to have been a very ancient one, and I agree with Dilthey (p. 115) that the myths arose from the actual custom, not the custom from the myths. It is likely, too, that there was some basis in real life for the throwing of apples at the bridegroom which Stesichorus speaks of in his Epithalamium of Helen:

πολλὰ μὲν Κυδωνία μᾶλα ποτερρίπτουν ποτὶ δίφρον ἄνακτι,  
πολλὰ δὲ μύρσινα φύλλα  
καὶ ῥοδίνους στεφάνους Ἴων τε κορωνίδας οὔλας

frag. 27, Bgk.

and for their use by Laodamia in a religious ceremony performed in honor of her dead husband.<sup>3</sup>

We have seen above, that, with the Greeks of our own day, the apple is used in courtship. In Furtwängler's Catalogue of Vases in Berlin is described a painting which the editor thinks may represent such a scene.<sup>4</sup> The young man, however, is presenting the love-token not to the maiden herself, but to her father, and Furtwängler's

<sup>1</sup> Eratosthenes, *Catast.* iii.; Hyg. *Astron.* ii.; Athen. iii. p. 83 C (quoting Asclepiades of Myrlea); Serv. *ad Aen.* iv. 484.

<sup>2</sup> Apollod. i. 5, 3.

<sup>3</sup> Hyg. *Fab.* 104.

<sup>4</sup> No. 2518.



interpretation is not convincing. In literature, the notices of this custom are numerous. In the lexicon of Suidas the words μήλω βληθῆναι are thus explained: ἐπὶ τῶν εἰς ἔρωτά τινα ἐπαγομένων. (Hesychius interprets μήλω βαλεῖν similarly. His words are: πτοῆσαι τινα καὶ εἰς ἔρωτα ὑπαγαγέσθαι.) Here, then, we have the expression 'to be hit with an apple' used as a metaphor. The practice itself must, of course, have been common, and of long standing, before the words descriptive of it could have become a stereotyped phrase, synonymous with 'love-making.' And yet, strangely enough, this figurative use of the words does not make its first appearance in late writers, but was taken, by Suidas, from one of our earliest sources on the custom, Aristophanes, whom the lexicographer quotes, in the passage just cited, as furnishing an illustration of his definition. The words of Aristophanes occur in the *Clouds*, in the speech of the Just Argument, who is made to say to the Athenian youth:

μήδ' εἰς ὀρχηστρίδος εἰσάττειν, ἵνα μὴ πρὸς ταῦτα κεχηνὼς  
μήλω βληθεὶς ὑπὸ πορνιδίου τῆς εὐκλείας ἀποθρανισθῇς.

*Nub.* 996 f.<sup>1</sup>

We labor under the disadvantage, then, of having to investigate a custom which, by the time of our earliest source, has already become so stale as to furnish this metaphor.

The following epigram, which appears to have been written to accompany the gift of an apple, is ascribed to the philosopher Plato:

τῷ μήλω βάλλω σε, σὺ δ' εἰ μὲν ἐκούσα φιλεῖς με  
δεξαμένη, τῆς σῆς παρθενίης μετὰδος.  
εἰ δ' ἄρ', ὃ μὴ γίγνιτο, νοεῖς, τοῦτ' αὐτὸ λαβούσα  
σκέψαι τὴν ὥρην ὡς ὀλιγοχρόνιος.

*Diog. Laert.* iii. 23.

The next one, also ascribed to Plato, apparently served the same purpose:

μήλον ἐγὼ· βάλλει με φιλῶν σέ τις. ἀλλ' ἐπίνευσον,  
Ξανθίπη· κἀγὼ καὶ σὺ μαραινόμεθα.

*Ibid.*

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Schol. *ad loc.*: μήλω βληθεὶς: οὕτως ἔλεγον οἱ παλαιοὶ τὸ πτοῆσαι καὶ εἰς ἔρωτα ἀγαγεῖν.

In the fifth idyl of Theocritus, it is the lady who does the wooing. The goat-herd Comatas is the speaker :

βάλλει καὶ μάλοισι τὸν αἰπόλον ἃ Κλεαρίστα  
τὰς αἰγὰς παρελάντα καὶ ἀδύ τι ποππυλιάσδει.

Theoc. *Idyll.* v. 88 f.

One can scarcely believe that Theocritus merely meant, here, 'Clearista makes love to her goat-herd,' but so the scholiast took it. His note runs thus: βάλλει καὶ μάλοισιν: ἀντὶ τοῦ πειράταί με εἰς ἔρωτα ὑπαγαγέσθαι. τὸ γὰρ μῆλα βάλλειν ἐπὶ τούτοις ἔτασσον.

The initiative is similarly taken by the girl in another idyl:

βάλλει τοι, Πολύφαμε, τὸ ποίμνιον ἃ Γαλάτεια  
μάλοισιν, δυσέρωτα τὸν αἰπόλον ἄνδρα καλεῦσα.

Theoc. *Idyll.* vi. 6 f.

Vergil was thinking of these two places, when he wrote :

malo me Galatea petit, lasciva puella,  
et fugit ad salices, et se cupit ante videri.

Verg. *Ecl.* iii. 64 f.

In the second and third idyls, imitated in the third bucolic, the lover brings a present of apples to his mistress,<sup>1</sup> and, in the eleventh (*v.* 39), Polyphemus calls Galatea γλυκύμαλον.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Theoc. *Idyll.* ii. 120 :

μᾶλα μὲν ἐν κόλποισι Διωνύσοιο φυλάσσω.

*Ibid.* iii. 10 f. :

ἦνιδε τοι δέκα μᾶλα φέρω· τηνῶθε καθεῖλον,  
ὦ μ' ἐκέλευε καθελεῖν τύ· καὶ αὔριον ἀλλά τοι οἰσῶ.

Verg. *Ecl.* iii. 70 f. :

quod potui, puero silvestri ex arbore lecta  
aurea mala decem misi; cras altera mittam.

Compare, also, Verg. *Ecl.* ii. 51 f., and Martial, vii. 91.

<sup>2</sup> Explained by the scholiast, *ad loc.*, as πρὸς φθεγμα ἑρωτικόν. With this place in Theocritus may be compared Sappho, *frag.* 93 (Bergk) :

οἶον τὸ γλυκύμαλον ἐρεύθεται ἄκρῳ ἐπ' ὕσδι  
ἄκρον ἐπ' ἀκροτάτῳ· λελάθοντο δὲ μαλοδρόπῃες,  
οὐ μὰν ἐκλελάθοντ', ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐδύναντ' ἐπικεσθαι.

This passage is explained by one in Himerius (*i.* 16): Σαπφοῦς ἦν ἄρα μῆλι μὲν

Theocritus, indeed, used this idea so often that I cannot feel that the editors have any excuse for meddling with the received text in *Idyll.* xiv. 38. The injured lover is upbraiding his false sweetheart for the favor she has shown his rival. Finally she bursts into tears, and he exclaims, as she rushes from the room :

ἄλλον ἰοῦσα

θάλλπε φίλον. τήνῃ τὰ σὰ δάκρυα μᾶλα ῥέοντι.

Evidently his meaning is 'These tears of thine are flowing as love-tokens for him.'<sup>1</sup>

In another place we are told of Polyphemus:

ἦρατο δ' οὐ μάλοις, οὐδὲ ῥόδῳ, οὐδὲ κικίννοις,  
ἀλλ' ὀρθαῖς μανίαις, αἰεῖτο δὲ πάντα πάρεργα.

Theoc. *Idyll.* xi. 10 f.

In the first book of Propertius is a charming bit of description, where the poet tells how he came into Cynthia's house and found her sleeping:

et modo solvebam nostra de fronte corollas,  
ponebamque tuis, Cynthia, temporibus;  
et modo gaudebam lapsos formare capillos;  
nunc furtiva cavis poma dabam manibus,  
omniaque ingrato largibar munera somno,  
munera de prono saepe voluta sinu!

Prop. i. 3, 21 ff.

Another Propertian passage describes Cydonian apples as a love-gift:

illis munus erant decussa Cydonia ramo.

Prop. iv. 13, 27.

---

εἰκάσαι τὴν κόρην, τοσοῦτον χαρισαμένην τοῖς πρὸ ὥρας δρέψασθαι σπεύδουσιν, ὅσον [οὐδ'] ἄκρω τοῦ δακτύλου γεύσασθαι, τῷ [δὲ] καθ' ὥραν τρυγᾶν τὸ μῆλον μέλλοντι τηρῆσαι τὴν χάριν ἀκμάζουσιν.

This place in Sappho is imitated by Longus, *Past.* iii. 33; 34. Two other places in Longus may be noted here, i. 24; iii. 25.

<sup>1</sup> For parallels to the construction of μᾶλα — which I take to be predicate-apposition — cf. *Idyll.* v. 124: 'Ἰμέρα ἀνθ' ὕδατος ῥέτω γάλα; *ibid.* 126: ῥέτω χὰ Συβαρίτις ἐμὴν μέλι; Verg. *Ecl.* iii. 89: *mella fluant illi*.

This line bears a close resemblance to Lucretius's mention of them, in his account of primitive customs:

vel pretium [*sc.* amoris], glandes atque arbuta, vel pira lecta.

Lucr. v. 965.

Both places are probably reminiscences of Theocritus.

A very pretty picture of this lover's custom is found in the poem addressed by Catullus to his friend Ortalus (lxv. 15 ff.):

sed tamen in tantis maeroribus, Ortale, mitto  
haec expressa tibi carmina Battiadae,  
ne tua dicta vagis nequiquam credita ventis  
effluxisse meo forte putes animo,  
ut missum sponsi furtivo munere malum  
procurrit casto virginis e gremio,  
quod miserae oblatae molli sub veste locatum,  
dum adventu matris prosilit, excutitur:  
atque illud prono praeceps agitur decursu,  
huic manat tristi conscius ore rubor.

Philostratus gives a minute description of a picture in which apples are prominent. The parts of chief interest to us are: *Μῆλα ἔρωτες ἰδοὺ τρυγῶσιν . . . οἱ γὰρ κάλλιστοι τῶν ἐρώτων ἰδοὺ τέτταρες ὑπεξελθόντες τῶν ἄλλων δύο μὲν αὐτῶν ἀντιπέμπουσιν μῆλον ἀλλήλοις, ἡ δὲ ἑτέρα δυὰς ὁ μὲν τοξεύει τὸν ἕτερον, ὁ δὲ ἀντιτοξεύει καὶ οὐδὲ ἀπειλὴ τοῖς προσώποις ἔπαισιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ στέρνα παρέχουσιν ἀλλήλοις, ἢ ἐκεῖ πον τὰ βέλη πελάσῃ. καλὸν τὸ αἶνιγμα· σκόπει γάρ, εἴ τι ξυνήμι τοῦ ζωγράφου· φιλία ταῦτα, ὦ παῖ, καὶ ἀλλήλων ἱμερος, οἱ μὲν γὰρ διὰ τοῦ μῆλου παίζοντες πόθον ἄρχονται, ὅθεν ὁ μὲν ἀφίησι φιλήσας τὸ μῆλον, ὁ δὲ ὑπτίαις αὐτὸ ὑποδέχεται ταῖς χερσὶ δῆλον ὡς ἀντιφιλήσων, εἰ λάβοι, καὶ ἀντιπέμψων αὐτό, τὸ δὲ τῶν τοξοτῶν ζεύγος ἐμπεδοῦσιν ἔρωτα ἤδη φθάνοντα, καὶ φημὶ τοὺς μὲν παίζειν ἐπὶ τῷ ἄρξασθαι τοῦ ἐράν, τοὺς δὲ τοξεύειν ἐπὶ τῷ μὴ λῆξαι τοῦ πόθου.* Philost. *Imag.* i. 6.

There is an entertaining account, in Lucian, of a lovers' quarrel. Ioessa, complaining of the shameful way her lover, Lysias, carries on with other women, in her presence, says: *τέλος δὲ τοῦ μῆλου ἀποδακνόν, ὅποτε τὸν Δίφιλον εἶδες ἀσχολούμενον — ἐλάλει γὰρ Θράσωνι — προκύψας πως εὐστόχως προσηκόντισας ἐς τὸν κόλπον αὐτῆς, οὐδὲ λαθεῖν γὰρ πειρώμενος ἐμέ· ἡ δὲ φιλήσασα μεταξὺ τῶν μαστῶν ὑπὸ τῷ ἀποδόσμῳ*

παρεβύσατο. *Dial. Mer.* xii. 1.<sup>1</sup> This custom of taking a bite out of the apple is a feature of the game in another place in Lucian,<sup>2</sup> and in Alciphron.<sup>3</sup> With the *φιλήσασα* of Lucian we may compare this line, from an epigram ascribed to Petronius :

oscula cum pomis mitte ; vorabo lubens.

Petr. *Epig.* 34.

Another curious development of the practice of giving apples is found in the messages which were sometimes written on them. For the existence in historical times of such a custom we have no evidence ; but three stories which have come down to us describing this use of the apple make it probable that it was not unknown in real life. These are the story of the Apple of Discord, — which Lucian says bore the legend ἡ καλὴ λαβέτω,<sup>4</sup> — the story of the apple that got Cydippe into such a coil, and the one, preserved in the scholia to the *Iliad*, about the maiden who fell in love with Achilles, and assisted him, by a message written upon an apple which she flung to him, to capture her native town. This last story, which is of unusual interest in that the scholiast ascribes it to Hesiod, thus making it the oldest of all the sources for our study, is as follows : Ἀχιλλεὺς ὑπὸ τὸν Τρωϊκὸν πόλεμον πορθῶν τὰς περιοίκους τῆς Ἰλίου πόλεις, ἀφίκετο εἰς τὴν πάλαι μὲν Μονηρίαν, νῦν δὲ Πήδασον καλουμένην, καὶ αὐτὴν σὺν ταῖς ἄλλαις ἐλεῖν. ἀπογόντος δὲ αὐτοῦ τὴν εἰς τὸ τέλος πολιορκίαν διὰ τὴν ὀχυρότητα τοῦ τόπου καὶ μέλλοντος ἀναχωρεῖν, φασὶν εἶσω τῶν τειχῶν οὐσάν τινα παρθέον ἐρασθῆναι τοῦ Ἀχιλλέως, καὶ λαβοῦσαν μῆλον εἰς τοῦτο ἐπιγράψαι, καὶ ῥῦσαι εἰς μέσον τῶν Ἀχαιῶν· ἦν δὲ ἐν αὐτῷ γεγραμμένον “ μὴ σπεῦδ’, Ἀχιλλεῦ, πρὶν Μονηρίαν ἐλεῖν· ὕδωρ γὰρ οὐκ ἔνεστι· διψῶσιν κακῶς.” τὸν δὲ Ἀχιλλεῖα ἐπιμείναντα οὕτω λαβεῖν τὴν πόλιν τῇ τοῦ ὕδατος σπάνει. ἡ ἱστορία παρὰ Δημητρίῳ καὶ Ἡσιόδῳ. Schol. Ven. A. on *Il.* Z 35.<sup>5</sup> While it is true that the apple is here used, primarily at least, not as a love-token, but to convey a message

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the almost word-for-word imitation by Aristaenetos (i. 25).

<sup>2</sup> Lucian, *Tox.* 13.

<sup>3</sup> Alciphron, *Epist.* iii. 62, 2.

<sup>4</sup> Lucian, *Dial. Mar.* 5.

<sup>5</sup> Diltney (p. 113<sup>1</sup>) thinks we have in Philostratus (*Epist.* 62, Kays.) an allusion to this story.

of encouragement relative to the siege which Achilles is prosecuting, one is strongly tempted to believe that the maiden's apple was meant to bear more than one message, and to hint that another citadel was quite as near capitulation as was Monenia.

Cydicpe's story<sup>1</sup> is transmitted to us in the *Heroides* of Ovid, who found it in a poem by Callimachus. It is something like this: Acontius was a beautiful youth of the island Ceos. At the yearly festival, in Delos, he saw Cydicpe, the daughter of an Athenian of high rank, and straightway fell in love with her. Following her to the temple of Artemis, whither she had gone, in company with her nurse, he plucked a quince, and, writing on it, "I swear by the sanctuary of Artemis to wed Acontius," flung it at her feet. The nurse picked it up and handed it to Cydicpe, who read it aloud, for Nurse's benefit. By thus saying aloud the words on the quince, she became bound to marry the young Cean, for the goddess had heard her vow. Now Cydicpe's father had promised her to another, and, upon her return to Athens, preparations were made for the solemnization of her marriage. When the day appointed for the ceremony came, however, Cydicpe was suddenly taken sick, and the marriage had to be postponed. Twice again, the day was set, and, twice again, did Cydicpe fall sick. Finally, the father appealed to Delphi, and learned that the wrath of Artemis, occasioned by the breaking of Cydicpe's vow, could only be appeased by the girl's marriage to Acontius, which was, accordingly, allowed to take place.

Yet another side of the wide sphere of usefulness of the apple is recorded by Horace, in the *Satires* ii. 3, 272 f. :

quid, cum Piceñis excerpens semina pomis  
gaudes si cameram percusti forte, penes te es ?

upon which Porfyrio comments: *solent amantes semina ex malis orbiculatis duobus primis compressa digitis mittere in cameram, velut augurantes, si cameram contigerint, posse sperari ad effectum duci, quod animo conceperunt.*

I shall now consider a number of passages which must be dealt with in determining how much the likeness of the apple to the shape

---

<sup>1</sup> Imitated in one told of Ctesylla ; Antoninus Liberalis, i.

of a woman's breast had to do with the part it played in courtship and marriage.<sup>1</sup>

Aristophanes has, in the *Acharnians* (v. 1199):

τῶν τιθίων, ὡς σκληρὰ καὶ Κυδώνια.

In the *Lysistrata* occur the words (v. 115) :

τᾶς Ἑλένας τὰ μᾶλα.

The scholiast explains: τοὺς μαστοὺς μῆλα φησίν. In the *Ecclesiazusae* (v. 901 ff.) the young man says, of the girl:

τὸ τρυφερὸν γὰρ ἐμπέφυκε  
τοῖς ἀπαλοῖσι μηροῖς  
κάπὶ τοῖς μήλοις<sup>2</sup> ἐπανθεῖ.

Two other writers of comedy, also, make the comparison. Crates (*frag.* 40 Kock) has :

πάνυ γάρ ἐστιν ὀρικότατα  
τὰ τιθί' ὥσπερ μῆλον ἢ μιμαίκυλα.

Cantharus (*frag.* 6 Kock) has :

Κυδωνίους μήλουσιν εἰς τὰ τιθία.

<sup>1</sup> For this symbolism in modern literature, cf. Goethe, *Faust* v. 3771 ff.

FAUST. Einst hatt' ich einen schönen Traum ;  
Da sah ich einen Apfelbaum,  
Zwei schöne Aepfel glänzten dran,  
Sie reizten mich, ich stieg hinan.

DIE SCHÖNE. Der Aepfelchen begehrt ihr sehr,  
Und schon vom Paradiese her.  
Von Freuden fühl' ich mich bewegt  
Dass auch mein Garten solche trägt,

with the note in the edition of von Loeper (Berl. 1879), who cites "Dschami in *Jussuf u. Suleika*, 15 Gesang, von der Brust Suleika's: Zwei frische Aepfel, welche einen Zweig geziert; Ariost. *Ras. Rol.* vii. 14: *Due pome acerbe e pur d'avorio fatte, Vengono e van, come onde*; Konrad's *Trojanischer Krieg*, von der Helena: Als ob zwên epfel wünneclich, Ihr waeren dar gestecket; auch Bürger: Und suche den Baum, den Baum, Der den Apfel der Liebe dir trug." Cf. also Goethe's *Der Müllerin Verrath*, third stanza, and Grimm's *Wörterbuch s.vv. Apfel, Frauenaepfel*.

<sup>2</sup> The scholiast says: μήλοις: ταῖς παρειαῖς, on which Rutherford (*Schol. Arist.* ii. p. 550) observes that this is a known late sense of μῆλον. In view of the other places in Aristophanes, I feel pretty certain that the scholiast is mistaken.

Coming down to Theocritus, we have, in a mime attributed to him, a dialogue in which the girl exclaims, as she repels the rude advances of her lover:

τί ῥέξεις σατυρίσκε; τί δ' ἐνδοθεν ἄψαο μαζῶν;

and the young man replies:

μᾶλα τεὰ πρᾶτιστα τάδε χνόοντα διδάξω.

Theoc. *Idyll.* xxvii. 48 f.

The writers of the Greek Anthology yield a few more illustrations. Leonidas of Tarentum has this line:

καὶ μαζὸς, ἀκμῆς ἄγγελος, κυδωνιᾷ.

*Anth. Plan.* 182.

In another place<sup>1</sup> he has the word *μηλοῦχον* — literally, ‘apple-sustainer’ — used of a *strophium*.

In an epigram by Rufinus we read:

παρθένος ἀργυροπέζος ἐλούετο, χρύσεια μαζῶν  
χρωτὶ γαλακτοπαγεί μῆλα διαινομένη, κτέ.

*Anth. Pal.* v. 60.

Two epigrams by Paulus Silentiarius are especially illuminating. In one, he writes:

εἴ ποτ' ἐμοί, χαρίεσσα, τεῶν τάδε σύμβολα μαζῶν  
ᾧπασας, ὀλβίζω τὴν χάριν ὥς μεγάλην,

*Anth. Pal.* v. 291.

and that the *τάδε* means ‘apples’ is clear from the epigram immediately preceding, upon the same theme, and, very possibly, written for the same occasion; here apples are specified as the gift, and a comparison with the breasts is again intended:

ὄμμα πολυπτοίητον ὑποκλέπτουσα τεκούσης,  
συζυγίην μῆλων δῶκεν ἐμοὶ ῥοδέων  
θηλυτέρῃ χαρίεσσα. μάγον τάχα πυρσὸν ἐρώτων  
λαθριδίως μήλοισ μίξεν ἐρευθομένοις  
εἰμὶ γὰρ ὁ τλήμων φλογὶ σύμπλοκος· ἀντὶ δὲ μαζῶν  
ᾧ πόποι, ἀπρήκτοισ μῆλα φέρω παλάμαις.

*Anth. Pal.* v. 290.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Anth. Pal.* vi. 211.



An anonymous squib addressed to an old woman whose unwelcome attentions have made her troublesome to some young fellow, should probably be included here :

ἄλλην δρῦν βαλάνιζε, Μενέσθιον· οὐ γὰρ ἔγωγε  
 ἔκκαιρον μήλων προσδέχομαι ῥντίδα·  
 ἀλλ' αἰεὶ πεπόθηκα συνακμάζουσιν ὀπώρην.  
 ὥστε τί πειράξεις λευκὸν ἰδεῖν κόρακα;

*Anth. Pal.* xi. 417.

The curious piece of metaphorical writing that follows, reminding one strongly of the figurative language of the Song of Songs, is from the speech of Bacchus to Beroe, in the *Dionysiaca* of Nonnus, an epic poet of, perhaps, the fourth century of our era :

“παρθένε νῦν χρόνος ἦλθε· ποτέ τρυγώμεν ὀπώρην;  
 σὸς στάχυς ἤέξετο καὶ ἀμητοῖο χατίζει·  
 λήιον ἀμήσω σταχυηφόρον, ἀντὶ δὲ Διοῦς  
 μήτρι τεῇ ρέξαιμι θαλύσια Κυπρογενεΐη.  
 δέξο δὲ γειοπόνον με τεῆς ὑποεργὸν ἀλώης·  
 ὑμετέρης με κόμισσε φυτηκόμον Ἀφρογενεΐης,  
 ὄφρα φυτὸν πῆξαιμι φερέσβιον, ἡμερίδων δὲ  
 ὄμφακα γινώσκω νεοθηλέα χερσὶν ἀφάσσω.  
 οἶδα, πόθεν ποτὲ μῆλα πεπαίνεται· οἶδα φυτεῦσαι  
 καὶ πτελέην τανύφυλλον ἐρειδομένην κυπαρίσσω·  
 ἄρσενα καὶ φοίνικα γεγηθότα θήλεϊ μίσγω,  
 καὶ ῥόδον, ἣν ἐθέλῃς, παρὰ μίλακι καλὸν ἀέξω.  
 μή μοι χρυσὸν ἄγοις κομιδῆς χάριν· οὐ χρέος ὄλβου·  
 μισθὸν ἔχω δύο μῆλα, μῆς ἓνα βότρυν ὀπώρης.”  
 τοῖα μάτην ἀγόρευε, καὶ οὐκ ἡμίβετο κούρη  
 Βάκχον μὴ νοέουσα γυναιμανέος στίχα μύθων.

Nonnus, *Dionys.* 42, 297 ff. (Köchly's edition).

What inferences may fairly be drawn from all this evidence? It may be held, I think, that from Aristophanes down, the comparison of breasts with apples was a familiar one. On the other hand, we must not forget that only in late writers do we find this symbolism an element in the game of sending or throwing apples, as love-gifts. What we must seek, in order to explain satisfactorily all the many

phases of this widespread, tenacious custom, is some simple, fundamental idea, through which, in some way, the general notion of love or fruitfulness shall be symbolized in the apple. This requirement is not satisfied by the hypothesis that the apple represented the breast, and, for that reason, and because the writers who so understood the practice are late writers, I am inclined to believe that they were themselves deceived by the commonness of the comparison of apple and breast, and invented, while they supposed, very likely, that they were following tradition, a symbolism of their own.

My conclusion is that in the remotely ancient attribution of the apple and the apple-kind, as typical of all fruitfulness, to Aphrodite — the *alma Venus* of Lucretius's invocation — and its connexion also with other divinities of like functions (such as Dionysus, the god of vegetation, and Ge, the mother of all things), originated the meaning which it was felt to have when employed in courtship and the marriage ceremony. So much seems fairly plain. But the evidence on the subject left us by the classical authors does not enable us to take the next step, and offer an explanation of the fact that the apple was used in preference to other objects, as representing the life-giving functions of these deities. The original association of Aphrodite and the apple may very likely have been purely accidental, arising from a very ancient connexion, in some locality, of the worship of the apple-tree and the worship of a goddess of love. If one of these cults spread, it might naturally carry the other with it, and the apple-tree, which started, let us suppose, as an independent god, might, in the course of time, come to be looked upon as owing its sacred character simply to its being in some sense an emblem of Aphrodite.